

GALENA PARK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN

1. Teacher Certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (TEC 21.044, 21.003)

Currently

In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is assigned to a subject outside of his/her certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. Approval or denial of this request must then be issued by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Proposed

To best serve Galena Park ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The District's goal will continue to be hiring certified teachers; however, flexibility is needed in the areas that are difficult to fill.

- A. Galena Park ISD proposes to submit a request for approval to fill a teaching position to the Superintendent or designee:
 - i. For a certified teacher to teach one subject out of his/her certified field; or
 - ii. To allow an individual who holds a four-year degree to teach in a bilingual classroom, if he/she is willing to pursue a bilingual certification and is eligible to take the bilingual exam, and/or be enrolled in an appropriate Alternative Certification program.
- B. The written request would outline the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which would qualify this individual to teach the subject, and must be submitted by the principal to the Superintendent or designee for approval.

The request will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades and vocations to teach the crafts of those trades and vocations, such as welding, health sciences, architecture and construction, and other career and technical courses.

Rationale

Exemption from TEC 21.044 and 21.003 would enrich applicant pools in specific content areas and enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of career and technical course offerings.

2. School Start Date

(EB Legal) (TEC 25.0811)

Currently

Texas Education Code provides that students may not begin school before the fourth Monday of August.

Proposed

To best serve the students of Galena Park ISD, we propose to be allowed to create a school calendar which serves the needs of our local community. We propose moving the mandatory start date back one week, so that students will begin school no earlier than the third week of August.

Rationale

The number of days in the fall and spring semesters will be more balanced than they are currently. Additionally, Galena Park ISD classes can begin prior to the start of San Jacinto College classes.

3. Teacher Evaluation

(DNA Legal, DNA Local) (TEC 21.352)

Currently

In appraising teachers, each school district shall use the appraisal process developed by the commissioner (T-TESS) or an appraisal process and performance criteria developed by Campus and District Planning and Advisory Committees based on the commissioner's criteria. In Galena Park ISD, a locally-developed instrument would be required to receive approval from each of our twenty-five Campus Planning and Advisory Committees prior to being submitted to the District Planning and Advisory Committee for approval. Our District Planning and Advisory Committee already includes a member from each of our campuses.

Proposed

To best serve the needs of Galena Park ISD staff, we propose to allow one district committee of administrators and teachers the option to develop alternate appraisals for specific groups of teachers, where the adopted teacher evaluation may not be the most appropriate evaluation. Such groups of teachers could include Life Skills, PASS, SLC, Elementary Specials, and CTE classes, among others.

We propose to allow one district committee of administrators and teachers the option to develop a local teacher evaluation that can be used in the place of the commissioner's recommended instrument (T-TESS). The newly developed instrument would not include a student growth measure, nor would it require annual online recertification for appraisers.

Rationale

Districts already have the right to develop alternate appraisals, but each appraisal instrument must be approved by the District Planning and Advisory Committee and each Campus Planning and Advisory Committee. Our District Planning and Advisory Committee already includes representation from each campus.

4. Minimum Minutes of Instruction

(EC LEGAL & EB LEGAL) (TEC 25.081)

Currently

House Bill 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amends the Texas Education Code (TEC) §25.081, by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing with language requiring districts and charter schools to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess). The bill also allows school districts and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disasters, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or other reasons.

Proposed

To best serve the Galena Park ISD community, the exemption from TEC 25.081 would allow our Superintendent or designee to determine whether to amend our District calendar to make up lost instructional time.

Rationale

The proposed exemption from TEC 25.081 will allow Galena Park ISD to avoid submitting waiver requests to TEA in cases of unforeseen changes to school calendar, and will further allow Galena Park ISD to adjust school day schedules to better meet the instructional needs of students

5. Kindergarten – Grade 4 Class Size

(EEB LEGAL) (TEC 25.111-13)

Currently

Kindergarten – 4th grade classes are to be kept at a 22 to 1 student-teacher ratio according to State law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency.

Along with the waiver, a letter is required to be sent home to each parent in each class/section exceeding the 22:1 ratio, informing them a waiver has been submitted. In many instances, soon after the waiver process is complete, the class size drops below the maximum 22:1 ratio due to students withdrawing from the district and/or school.

Proposed

To best serve the needs of Galena Park ISD students and staff, the District will attempt to maintain the 22:1 ratio in all K-4th core classrooms. However, if the class size exceeds this ratio, the Superintendent will report the circumstance to the Board of Trustees.

In the event a K-4th grade core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will contact the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation. The District will provide relief by placing an instructional aide in the classroom for the duration of time it remains at or above the 25:1 ratio.

Rationale

While the District believes small class size plays a positive role in student learning, this must be balanced with the logistics and timing of adding staff. We do not believe there is a negative impact to student achievement when one or two additional students are added to a class. Most importantly, research demonstrates it is the teacher in the classroom, not absolute class size, which has the greatest impact on student learning.

A TEA waiver request will not be necessary when a K-4th grade classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

6. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

(FO LEGAL) (TEC 37.0012)

Currently

Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a Campus Behavior Coordinator on each campus. This person is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

Proposed

To best serve the needs of students and staff in Galena Park ISD, we propose the District abstain from designating only one person as the Campus Behavior Coordinator.

Rationale

Galena Park ISD's elementary campuses currently have at least two administrators: one principal and one assistant principal, who by job description, serve in this capacity already. Our secondary schools each have one principal and multiple assistant principals who all work together to ensure compliance with Chapter 37, Subchapter A. Our District believes in a collaborative approach to discipline, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the Galena Park ISD's Student Code of Conduct.

7. Exemptions from Future TEC Mandates

To best serve our local Galena Park ISD community, staff, and students, Galena Park ISD includes a provision in our Local Innovation Plan for the District to maintain control over any future, eligible Texas Education Code mandates, which may be exempted by a 2/3 majority vote of the Galena Park ISD Board of Trustees.